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ABSTRACT

The Office of Personnel Management should designate a new professional series for hiring individuals in outdoor recreational management. A new professional series would help set a standard for professionals with training in both resource management and the social sciences. Recommended educational requirements for the series include: (1) natural resources management; (2) history of the conservation movement; (3) political science; (4) economics; (5) accounting and financial management; (6) basic concepts of maps, surveying, and property ownership; (7) natural resource protection; (8) principles of business management; (9) remote sensing and photogrammetry; (10) basic computer science; (11) data/information management; (12) communications; (13) recreation planning; (14) multiple resources inventory techniques and biometrics; (15) interpretive planning, media production and programming, including resource management and cultural resources; (16) management of the recreation resource; (17) planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining recreational facilities; (18) management of recreational activities; (19) marketing the recreation resource; (20) understanding and working with the recreation visitor; (21) recreation for special populations; (22) fundamentals of sociology; (23) international recreation and tourism; (24) fundamentals of law enforcement; and (25) fundamentals of cultural resources. (KS)

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EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE BASED OUTDOOR RECREATION PROFESSIONALS

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By

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Editors' note: The following was presented as part of PANEL #1: PUBLIC, PRIVATE, PUBLIC. A transcription of the question and answer period can be found in Appendix B.

Introduction

The business we are about to discuss is important. Recreation is the revitalization of the human being--physical, mental, and spirtual. And what better place to perform this revitalization than in a forest environment!

The Forest Service is in the business of creating memories that last a life-time--memories that repeat "yes, we're in love with life; and with the spirit of living!" We contemplate this message in a healthy environmnent, and we need this renewal more and more frequently in our fast-paced, professional lifes.

The Resource Based Recreation Professional

Currently, there is no professional series in the government for the resource-based recreation professional, at least not one that has positive education requirements. The positive education requirement is important--because without it the profession will not advance, and without it we can not set meaningful professional standards.

There is renewed interest in developing a new professional series which recognizes the need to manage recreational lands and recreational visitors. The new professional series would recognize those professionals with training in both resource management and the social sciences. Interest in the new series is a result of the work of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, and as a consequence of the skills needed to prepare individual forest land management plans. The Forest Service has formally gone on record twice in calling for such a professional series: once in the 1988 publication, *The National Recreation Strategy*, and recently in a letter from the Chief of the Forest Service.

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First, let's describe briefly the current role of the different series in hiring individuals in outdoor recreation. The Forest Service now uses a number of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) series in recruiting and filling these positions. For example, we use the 460 series (forestry), the 807 series (landscape architecture), the 193 series (archeologists), the 401 series (biological sciences), as well as a number of others, including the 023 series (outdoor recreation planners). We typically advertise our recreation jobs simultaneoulsy in

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these series and others so that we are able to hire individuals trained in any one of these areas who had indeed specialized in outdoor recreation. This may seem to be a backward way to do business, and we would be the first to agree that this creates a problem in the hiring of professional outdoor recreation specialists.

As a result, we have recently joined forces with six other federal agencies and are pursuing the possibility of creating a new series specifically for resource-based recreation professionals. These agencies include the Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation. We estimate that this pursuit will take from two to three years. The importance of recreation professionals has been underscored by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors and more recently by President Bush when he received the annual award of the Great Oudoors from the Coleman Corporation and the American Recreation Coalition.

Even with seven agencies joining forces, there is no guarantee of success. We need your (outdoor recreation professors) support also. The task is now to convince the Office of Personnel Management and the personnel offices of the Departments of Agriculture, Army and, Interior that there is a critical need to create the series.

We need to be able to answer such questions as:

1. How large a population are we talking about, i.e., how many positions would you have, how many individuals with these special skills? This is where the joint effort of all the federal agencies is important.

2. What are these special skills? There are a number of studies in existence. We have completed a cooperative study with Texas A & M university to identify these skills. Another source of data is the content of our own in-service training to correct the perceived deficiencies.

3. What happens if you are not able to hire individuals with these skills, i.e., the cost of failure? We are presently gathering case data within the various agencies to answer this question.

Education Requirements

Assuming we secure approval to develop a series, we then need to define the positive education requirements for the new series. Presently, there are a number of curricula in natural resource colleges throughout the nation that come close to what we would envision as being necessary. The accreditation and certification standards prepared by the National Parks and Recreation Association will be another useful source of possible requirements.

24 EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Based on our studies and the experience of some of our managers, here are some of the areas we consider important for the resource-based recreation manager. These are not listed in any order or priority and do not necessarily represent individual courses.

1. An understanding of the management techniques for the basic natural resources, e.g., water, forage, wildlife, recreation, fiber/timber, minerals, wilderness, and cultural resources.

2. History of the conservation movement from 1850 to the present.

3. Fundamentals of political science with special emphasis on the political process at the state and federal level.

4. Fundamentals of economics.

5. Accounting and financial management for the small business.

6. Basic concepts of maps, surveying, and property ownership.

7. Natural resource protection, i.e., fire, insects, and disease, including fire ecology.

8. Principals of management including planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, budgeting, etc.

9. Fundamentals of remote sensing and photogrammetry.

10. Basic computer skills, e.g., the daily use of word processing, spread sheets, and data bases.

11. Data/information management.

12. Communications and listening skills.

13. Recreation planning including the use of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum system, use and demand data, and integration of recreation planning alternatives with multi-resource planning.

14. Multi-resource inventory techniques and biometrics.

15. Interpretive planning, media production and programming, including resource management and cultural resources.

16. Management of the recreation resource.

17. Planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining recreation facilities.

18. Management of recreation activities.

19. Marketing the recreation resource.

20. Understanding and working with the recreation visitor.

21. Providing recreation opportunities for special populations, i.e., access.

22. Fundamentals of sociology relevant to recreation management.

23. International recreation and tourism.

24. Fundamentals of law enforcement.

25. Fundamentals of cultural resources.

26. OTHER.

These are the needs. How much and what is appropriate for the undergraduate/graduate curriculum, and what is the responsibility of the employer will be issues to be negotiated between the academic community and the employers.

Conclusion

In addition to all of the above we have in recreation something that is probably unique to recreation management and that is the skill/characteristic of personality. You have to like people! Could that be changed by education?

Students considering resource-based recreation as a career need to be very aware of this. Studies to date indicate that liking people is not a strong characteristic of many natural resource professionals. The present system seems to be that those natural resource professionals who like people tend to gravitate towards recreation management, picking up a smattering of understanding of the skill areas I have just mentioned. In recent years we have tried to augment this on-the-job experience with formal education in an academic environment of the most critical skill needs. These tend to be primarily in the communications/listening and people management areas.

Recreation management by our agency will move ahead in the 1990s if we continue a strong people-focus, balanced with a strong resource respect--specifically, if we concentrate on two goals: first, taking exceptional care of our customers and providing a quality environment and, second, creating a management environment that encourages constant innovation.